DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 346 601 EA 024 047

AUTHOR Seay, Martha Ann; Blase, Joseph
TITLE Principals' Credibility and Micropolitical Strategies That Influence Teachers.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 53p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Effectiveness; Administrator Role; High Schools; Intergroup Relations; *Interpersonal Relationship; Interprofessional Relationship; *Politics of Education; *Principals; *Teacher Administrator Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Micropolitics

ABSTRACT

This paper reports a portion of the data from a larger study designed to examine the high school principal's influence on the classroom behavior and thinking of teachers. Data were derived from semistructured interviews conducted with a selective sample of 6 principals and 33 teachers in a suburban school district in the southeastern United States. Coded into categories of issue, strategy, and tactics, the findings indicate that principals use four strategies and nine tactics in their attempts to influence teachers' perspectives related to specific classroom issues. The effectiveness of principals' influence on specific classroom issues--public relations, order, instruction, and learning--depends on their credibility with teachers. The findings are then discussed in terms of how principals' micropolitical strategies and tactics affect the credibility that teachers hold for their principals. Three tables are included. (32 references) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED346601

PRINCIPALS' CREDIBILITY AND MICROPOLITICAL STRATEGIES THAT INFLUENCE TEACHERS

MARTHA ANN SEAY

MEADOWCREEK HIGH SCHOOL

GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(404)381-9680

NORCROSS, GEORGIA 30093

AND

JOSEPH BLASE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

G-10 ADERHOLD HALL

(404)542-4057

ATHENS, GEORGIA 30602

EA 024 047

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN **OTHER THAN PAPER COPY** HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. A. Seay

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

This paper reports a portion of the data from a larger study designed to examine the high school principal's influence on the classroom behavior and thinking of teachers. Semi-structured interviews with a selective sample of six principals and thirty-three teachers in a suburban school district in the Southeastern United States produced data that are coded into issue, strategy, and tactic categories. It was found that principals use four strategies and nine tactics in their attempts to influence teachers' perspectives related to specific classroom issues. The effectiveness of the principals' influence on specific classroom issues depends on the principals' credibility with teachers. The findings of the present study are discussed in terms of how the micropolitical strategies and tactics of principals affect the credibility that teachers hold for their principals.

Several studies have been conducted to determine if principals influence teachers in the classroom (Crowson and Porter-Gehrie, 1980; Ogawa and Hart, 1985; High and Achilles, 1986; Johnson and Venable, 1986; Corbett, Firestone, and Rossman, 1987; Blase, 1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1990, 1991, in press; & Blase and Kirby, 1992). These studies indicate that administrators do influence teachers' classroom behavior, but at least two studies (Blase, 1990 & Ogawa & Hart, 1985) describe this influence as minimal. The findings of the present study indicate that the influence of principals is, in fact, substantial, but subtle and therefore difficult to detect.

Micropolitical theory suggests that subtle influence can be very pervasive in organizations, and, in fact, the subtleness of many human interactions determines the success of people in their attempts to influence others. Micropolitical theory also suggests that social influence may be a function of the special "interests" people bring to the work place and that negotiated exchanges, rather than order imposed by the structure of the formal system, may determine behavior and attitudes (Blau, 1964; Etzioni, 1961; Hoyle, 1986). Definitions of micropolitics emphasize the use of influence to obtain

personal interests. Blase (1991) used the term "interpersonal politics" in his descriptions of micropolitics and defined the term "micropolitics" as "...the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations" (p.11).

Thus far, only Ball (1987) and Blase (1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1990, 1991, in press) have published research that examines the micropolitical strategies used by principals to influence teachers. Blase (1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1990, 1991, in press) used in-depth interviews, observations, and questionnaires to determine the teachers' perspective of political interactions between principals and teachers. Teachers described principals as using tactics for control, protection, and influence. Ball (1987) conducted an ethnographic study of the organizational structure of British comprehensive schools.

The present study builds on the work of Ball (1987) and Blase (1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1990, 1991, in press; Blase and Kirby, 1992) in an attempt to further describe the micropolitical strategies and tactics used by principals to influence teachers. These strategies and tactics are described in the context

of the perspectives (Becker et al, 1961) of both the teachers and principals who participated. The present study examines the principals' perspective of how they influence teachers and the teachers' perspective of the principals' influence strategies.

Research Method and Procedures

Qualitative research guidelines were used to construct and to conduct open-ended interviews as well as to select documents for analysis. Interviews were designed to be comprehensive; the objective was to collect interpretive data from principals and teachers through interview techniques that encouraged free expression of personal meanings associated with the phenomena under investigation (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Carkhuff, 1980).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selective sample of six principals and thirty-three teachers in a suburban school district in the Southeastern United States. The teachers and principals were selected from six schools in the district. A seventh school (High School 5) was eliminated in the early stages of the interviews because of possible researcher bias. At the time of the interviews, the district was expanding rapidly due to housing

construction. Three of the schools in the present study were established before the suburban growth began its most rapid phase in the late seventies, and three were established after 1980. All six schools were experiencing significant increases in number of students enrolled. The primarily middle and upper middle class population was 91.7% white.

Principals who participated in the present study were selected based on their reputations with teachers as principals who had high levels of influence on the classroom behavior and thinking of teachers. Every principal asked to participate in the study participated. The sample of principals consisted of five males and one female. The average age was 45.5. The participating principals had an average of 12 years experience as principals and had been in their current assignments an average of 4.2 years. All were married. Two held doctorate degrees, and four held specialist degrees. Fifty per cent of the high school principals in the district were included in the study.

The sample of 33 teachers consisted of 11 males and 22 females with an average age of 38.3. Average teaching experience was 12.8 years, 3.2 of which were with the current principal. Thirteen teachers held bachelors

degrees, 15 masters, 4 specialists, and 1 a doctorate. Twenty-six were tenured, and 28 were married. Every teacher asked to participate in the study participated.

Interview guides were used with principals and teachers to determine how principals influence the classroom behavior of teachers. Interviews were conducted in the interest of allowing the meaning of influence and related concepts to form through inductive processes. As these meanings developed, additional questions probed further the participants' perspectives (Becker et al, 1961; Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The following questions guided the interviews with principals:

1. What do you do to affect the classroom behavior and thinking of teachers?
2. What aspects of teacher behavior and thinking do you attempt to influence?
3. Why do you attempt to influence teachers' behaviors and thinking?
4. How do you feel about influencing teacher behavior and thinking?
5. How effective do you think you are in terms of influencing teacher behavior and thinking?

The following parallel questions guided the initial interviews with teachers:

1. What does your principal do to influence your classroom behavior and thinking?
2. How do the principal's attempts to influence you affect your behavior and thinking in the classroom?
3. What are the purposes of the principal's attempts to influence you?
4. What feelings do you have about the principal's attempts to influence you?
5. How effective is the principal in influencing you?

Interview data were supplemented with data from student and teacher handbooks, as well as the memoranda that principals distributed to teachers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

In the course of each interview, probe questions were used to encourage participants to elaborate and to clarify their descriptions of the principal's influence (Carkhuff, 1980). Open coding of data during the initial phases of collection produced tentative categories of analysis that were saturated in the later stages of data collection by additional selective and theoretical

sampling and by additional probe questions (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Carkhuff, 1980).

A line-by-line analysis of the data produced categories of principal behavior and thinking. These categories were then grouped into four major types of categories--strategies, tactics, issues, and purposes.

In the present study, the first question in the interview guide for principals was, "What do you do to affect the classroom behavior and thinking of teachers?" Teachers were asked a parallel form of the principals' first question, "What does your principal do to influence your classroom behavior and thinking?" Both teachers and principals responded with behaviors that could be classified as strategies as well as with behaviors that could be classified as tactics using operational definitions of theses terms. Data obtained in response to the first question have been coded into the categories of "strategies" and "tactics." A total of twenty strategies and ninety-nine tactics have been extracted from the data. Four of these strategies and nine of the tactics are presented in this report.

For the purposes of this analysis, the term "strategy" refers to those behaviors that are role-specific, i.e. conduct expected of any person cast in the

role of principal. Strategies are "what" principals do. All participants, including both principals and teachers, describe the principal in the high schools in which they work as using the four strategies described in this article. The six principals describe themselves and are described by all of their teachers as creating issues (Strategy 1), diffusing issues (Strategy 2), establishing purpose (Strategy 3), and reducing cognitive dissonance (Strategy 4). The titles of these strategy categories are etic, but all participants describe behaviors that fell into these categories.

The term "tactic" refers to those behaviors that vary with context or situational variables from principalship to principalship, including, but not limited to personality and experiences of the principal, nature of the community, and size of the school. In other words, tactics are "how" principals enact their strategies. Although high frequencies of the use of tactics outlined in this article are reported by participants, not all tactics are attributed to all principals. Many of the titles of the tactic categories are also etic, although some are emic, but the behaviors categorized in each tactic are consistent.

For the purposes of this analysis, "issues" are defined as shared concerns of school-wide interest. Interests of school-wide concern become issues. These shared concerns frequently represent conflicts of interests between and among teachers and principals. These shared concerns also frequently represent common interests between and among teachers and principals.

The data coded in the categories of "issues" were generated primarily by the second question asked of principals and the parallel form of this question asked of teachers. Principals were asked, "What aspects of teacher behavior and thinking do you attempt to influence?" The second question asked of teachers was "How do the principal's attempts to influence you affect your behavior and thinking in the classroom?" These interview guide questions produced data that could be categorized into the issues that are of concern to principals and also data that explain how these concerns are perceived by teachers. Often issues generate understandings of shared concerns that increase feelings of harmony or solidarity among teachers and principals. But frequently issues produce conflict between teachers and principals. The second question in the interview guides of the larger study generated data that produced a

total of twelve of these issues. The categories of "strategies" were then placed into larger categories of "issues." Each of these issues is of concern in all schools studied although the emphasis placed on each issue varies from school to school. This report describes four issues that are considered to be purposes in the schools studied.

The third question asked of principals, "Why do you attempt to influence teachers' behaviors and thinking?", and the parallel question asked of teachers, "What are the purposes of the principal's attempts to influence you?" produced data that were coded as "purposes." Each school in the present study seems to be in pursuit of a single "purpose." This purpose is building-specific and is a consistent, overriding concern that becomes the reason for existence for all people in each school. The purpose is different in each site.

The data are also analyzed for the "feelings" of participants related to the major categories of strategies, tactics, issues, and purposes. Participants in the present study were reluctant to answer the fourth question on the interview guide of principals--"How do you feel about influencing teachers behavior and thinking?" and the parallel form asked of teachers--"What

feelings do you have about the principal's attempts to influence you?" Consequently, data generated by these questions was not substantial. However, data produced in response to the other four questions included descriptions that revealed the participants' "feelings" relevant to the incidents described. Thus, every issue, strategy, and tactic described in the present study includes an affective component.

The final question--"How effective do you think you are in terms of influencing teacher behavior and thinking?", and its parallel--"How effective is the principal in influencing you?", produced the data that generated a description of the principals' credibility with teachers. The terms "credibility" and "effectiveness" are used interchangeably by participants in the present study.

Overview of Data

The data discussed in this article are drawn from a larger qualitative study that examines the perspectives of teachers and principals of how principals influence the classroom behavior and thinking of teachers. Of the ninety-nine tactics extracted from the data, nine are described in this report. The tactics presented here describe how principal influence the teachers'

perspective of specific classroom issues. These tactics include choosing what to notice, choosing when to notice, lets them come to him/her, assigning meaning, minimizing ambiguity, creating diversions, offering alternatives, prioritizing issues, and controlling the agenda. These tactics are examined in relationship to four strategies--creating issues, diffusing issues, establishing purpose, and reducing cognitive dissonance--and four issues--order, public relations, instruction, and learning. Table 1 shows the relationships between specific strategies and tactics.

Place Table 1 Here

Both cognitive and affective aspects of the thinking of the participants related to tactics, strategies, and issues are included in the descriptions of these categories. These descriptions represent the perspectives of both the principals and teachers who participated in the study. Frequencies (f) are reported for each of the strategy and tactic categories. These frequencies represent the number of participants who described specific categories during their interviews.

Since the data were collected using open-ended interviews, participants had great leeway in constructing

their responses. Failure by a participant to mention a tactic does not mean that the tactic does not occur, merely that the participant did not include a discussion of the tactic in his/her response.

All principals in the present study describe themselves as choosing what to notice (Tactic 1), choosing when to notice (Tactic 2), assigning meaning (Tactic 4), and minimizing ambiguity (Tactic 5). The other tactics--lets them come to him/her (Tactic 3), creating diversions (Tactic 6), offering alternatives (Tactic 7), prioritizing issues (Tactic 8), controlling the agenda (Tactic 9) were described by most principals. (See Table 2.)

Place Table 2 Here

Teachers' perceptions related to all tactics are in close agreement with the perceptions of principals although teachers note the occurrence of these tactics less frequently than the principals. All teachers report and that their principals choose what to notice (Tactic 1) and choose when to notice (Tactic 2) and report slightly lower frequencies of the other tactics. (See Table 3.)

Place Table 3 Here

Although these categories of data represent principal behaviors that affect the behavior and thinking of teachers both inside and outside the classroom, the focus of the present study is the classroom. As participants described the influence of the principal on teacher behavior and thinking in the classroom, however, participants frequently described principal behavior that actually occurred outside the classroom and often was intended to primarily affect teacher behavior and thinking outside the classroom. Participants agreed, however, that there is really no way to separate the principal's influence inside and outside the classroom because principal behavior outside the classroom inevitably "spills over" into the classroom. Thus any principal behavior has an affect on the behavior and thinking of teachers in the classroom.

Strategies and Related Tactics

Strategy 1: Creating Issues (f=39)

The participants in the present study describe twelve important issues. These twelve issues are relevant to all six high schools studied. The interpretation of the meanings of these issues as well as the importance of individual issues, however, varies among principals, among teachers, between teachers and principals, and from

school to school. The importance and the meanings attached to an issue seem related to the amount of power held by the individuals, interest groups, and coalitions concerned about specific issues. Principals possess great control over the status of an issue due to the amount of influence they are able to exert over others, but other individuals and groups are not without influence.

Principals in the present study make use of at least five tactics in their attempts to create issues. These tactics include choosing what to notice, choosing when to notice, letting them come to him/her, assigning meaning, and minimizing ambiguity. Tactics for creating issues relate primarily to determining the nature of specific interests.

Tactic 1: Choosing What to Notice (f=39)

The events that principals notice become issues in the minds of teachers. As principals tour their buildings, the situations that they are interested in or take notice of become important situations in the minds of teachers. As the principals who participated in the present study choose what to notice, they actually select from the numerous activities that go on in their buildings during the course of a day. For example, the

teachers in High School 2 (HS2) notice that their principal frequently tours up and down the hallways and stops to visit in classrooms that catch his/her interest. Teachers in HS2 believe that their principal "knows what's going on." Principal 2 (P2) remains visible but unobtrusive unless s/he notices something that s/he wants to let teachers know s/he noticed. Visiting classrooms in which interesting lessons are in progress is one way that P2 directs attention to specific aspects of instruction.

P1 also chooses to notice events in classrooms as s/he conducts routine tours. Teachers in HS1, however, describe their principal as "chosing to ignore some behavior" (T17) during his/her routine visits. For example, P1 visited the classroom of a new teacher unexpectedly during the teacher's first week on staff. The new teacher had been hired three weeks into the semester to relieve overcrowding, and found herself/himself in the awkward position of being observed on a day that s/he did not have a formally prepared lesson based on curriculum objectives. Rather than make an issue with the teacher or students about the nature of the lesson, the principal chose to become involved in the activity. By choosing not to notice the lack of a formal

plan, the principal was able to make the teacher feel more at ease, but, at the same time, the teacher felt that the principal would periodically notice instructional activities.

Tactic 2: Choosing When to Notice (f=39)

Timing is a very important factor governing the effectiveness of creating issues. If teachers are not ready to accept a situation, very often their reaction to suggestions is negative and/or defensive. When principals notice activities has a significant impact on issue creation in all six of the high schools studied. All the principals in the present study describe themselves as using timing as a tactic in issue creation.

The principal assigned to HS3 is very aware of the difficulty of trying to initiate change before the teachers are ready to accept the change. HS3 is an older, established school where the administrative expectations of teachers have become "traditionalized," i.e teachers have become very accustomed to a set of expectations. The three principals prior to P3 were very highly regarded by teachers, and the teachers are still following guidelines set by the three previous administrations. The teachers believe that they know how things should be done based on what was expected in past.

P3 had been in charge for less than five months when s/he agreed to participate in the present study. At the time of the interview, s/he expressed concern about getting his/her teachers to accept change. As P3 talked about change, s/he was very careful to emphasize his/her feeling that gradual change had a better chance of acceptance in his/her building than change that teachers were not yet ready to accept.

One of the first issues that P3 raised with teachers concerned the elimination of morning break. P3 thinks that students had too much unsupervised time during the ten-minute morning break. When s/he realized the need to eliminate this time and assessed the readiness of his/her teachers, students, and parents to accept a change, s/he decided to attack the issue gradually and to frame the issue as an instructional concern. The principal wanted to convince teachers that the ten minute break could be used instead as additional classroom time.

P3 first introduced the idea of changing the bell schedule to several small groups that s/he has set up for the purpose of input. One of these groups, the Local School Advisory Council (LSAC), is made up of several parents as well as student and teacher representatives. Another group, the Principal's Advisory Council (PAC), is

made up of teachers representing a cross section of the faculty. The monthly newsletter mailed home to parents also made mention of a possible change and solicited parental input. By allowing time for discussion and input P3 helped many people feel ownership of the proposed change.

> So it's all of a sudden come around a hundred, or 360 degrees again from what I didn't want, to what they didn't want, back around to my schedule anyway. So they feel it's theirs. And I started out with LSAC material--they've all addressed it--I've sent it out in the news letters I've sent out--and to people where they've all had time to react. So, the changes are being made, it's just that we're taking the time to let everybody have their little input, and everybody seems to be happy. P3

Tactic 3: Lets Them Come to Him/Her (f=32)

All eight of the teachers in HS1 describe their principal as one who "let's them come to him/her." Teachers in HS1 describe their principal as "accessible," "approachable," and ready to listen to the concerns of teachers. In fact, this determination to allow issues to surface seems to be the characteristic that teachers are most likely to notice with this principal. P1 spends almost the entire instructional day in the hallways and going in and out of classrooms. Most teachers view the behavior very positively, and explain that they think that the principal's availability means that the principal feels that any concern of a teacher is an issue

that needs to be addressed in as timely a fashion as possible. By making appearances in classrooms, P1 is able to have a direct effect on the classroom behavior and thinking of teachers.

Tactic 4: Assigning Meaning (f=30)

The way in which principals describe situations often determines whether or not teachers consider events to be issues or concerns. And, in fact, the principals in the present study spend a great deal of time describing incidents to other people in a way that helps people understand or make sense out of what happens. The way in which the principals studied present issues to teachers determines, to a large degree, the perspectives of teachers related to classroom concerns. Frequently, principals translate events in such a way that the events begin "to make sense" to teachers. By acting as translators, principals influence teachers' interpretations of events in the classroom. One teacher describes P4 as "the silver tongued devil" (T41) because P4 skillfully translates, or makes sense out of events.

Tactic 5: Minimizing Ambiguity (f=31)

The complexity surrounding the twelve issues analyzed in the present study often results in ambiguity related to the nature and relative importance of classroom

issues. The source of much of the conflict between teachers and principals is disagreement about which classroom issues are important and exactly what these issues are interpreted to mean. Many principals are able to use Tactic 4 (Assigning Meaning) to clarify both the meaning and importance of issues with teachers. However, all the principals studied also attempt to reduce the ambiguity surrounding these meanings. Often, the meaning assigned to an issue is distorted--teachers do not clearly understand the principals' interpretations of the nature and/or importance of classroom issues.

Teachers and principals frequently talk about the importance of effective communication. When the participants in the study talk about effective communication, they most often are trying to describe the reduction of the ambiguity created when people have different interpretations of the same communications.

Strategy 2: Diffusing Issues (f=39)

Principals frequently diffuse issues that they do not want to address. This strategy eliminates possible classroom behavior and thinking that might interfere with the purposes that principals envision for their schools. P7 quipped that s/he is unsure whether issues were "diffused" or "de-fused."

The principals of the schools examined in the present study use several tactics designed to eliminate or smooth over troublesome classroom issues. Direct tactics are used occasionally, but these principals are more apt to be subtle in their approach. These subtle tactics include choosing what to notice, choosing when to notice, lets them come to him/her, assigning meaning, minimizing ambiguity, creating diversions, and offering alternatives. Note that Tactics 1-5 are used either to create issues (Strategy 1) or to diffuse issues (Strategy 2).

Tactic 1: Choosing What to Notice (f=39)

By being selective in what they notice, the principals in the present study are able to diffuse many issues. The principals who spend time touring often choose to ignore some classroom situations that are occurring. Other principals choose to minimize touring in an attempt to reduce the number of classroom situations that come to their attention. And some choose to tour during times that they feel the issues that they want to ignore will not arise. The act of touring itself is interpreted as an expression of the principal's interest in events in the classroom as well as in the building; principals who choose to minimize touring are

described by the teachers interviewed as less interested in the events occurring in classrooms and in the building. But many issues are diffused simply because the teacher is unable to bring them to the principal's attention. Some concerns, however, become issues because teachers believe that the perceived problems need more attention than they are getting.

Tactic 2: Choosing When to Notice (f=39)

The timing that principals use to deal with classroom issues often determines the degree of control principals exert over these issues. The diffusion of an issue often requires only that enough time elapse for it to "die down," or that the principal be unavailable to deal with the issue at the time when concerns related to the issue are most pronounced. Dealing with potentially explosive issues when people are about to either leave for the day or immediately before a weekend or a vacation limits the attention that can be devoted to an issue.

Tactic 3: Lets Them Come to Him/Her (f=32)

By being available when teachers want to see them, the principals are able to diffuse many situations. By devoting immediate attention to teacher concerns, principals are often able to diffuse the situation before it becomes an issue. Allowing teachers to approach the

principals in the present study makes it possible for principals to actually increase the control they exercise over the in-class decisions of teachers and thus diffuse many situations before they become issues.

Tactic 4: Assigning Meaning (f=30)

The descriptions principals use to explain events often determines whether or not classroom situations become issues. For example, one teacher explained how description of an incident by a principal caused teachers to view a fight as a disagreement between two students rather than as a racial incident. In the schools in the present study, issues are sometimes diffused by simply having the principal describe them as non-issues.

Tactic 5: Minimizing Ambiguity (f=31)

Issues sometimes arise in the classrooms of the schools studied because people do not understand what is expected. Principals are often able to diffuse issues by simply minimizing the ambiguity associated with situations. Often, when people learn more "facts" about a situation, they no longer perceive the situation to be an issue.

Tactic 6: Creating Diversions (f=29)

Principals in the present study sometimes choose to divert teachers' attention away from problem issues. By

creating diversions, these principals diffuse troublesome issues. For example, T11 described faculty meetings in which the principal of HS1 distributed T-shirts or concluded by having teachers help themselves to an ice cream sundae bar. Typically, these meetings seem to be the ones in which the principal dispenses bad news or asks teachers to perform unpleasant duties either inside or outside the classroom. Making the situation as pleasant as possible diminishes its negative aspects and thus "spills over" into the classroom by helping teachers maintain positive perspectives.

Tactic 7: Offering Alternatives (f=26)

Sometimes principals offer alternatives in an attempt to diffuse an issue. This tactic seems to be very effective when teachers are unaware that alternatives exist. For example, in HS1 the principal frequently functions in the role of facilitator as s/he listens to the concerns of teachers related to their classrooms and either offers suggestions or helps teachers make contact with other people who have the necessary resources to address concerns. One teacher commented that P1 often stops in the middle of a discussion with a teacher to call the person in the county office who can answer a

pressing question or provide the materials or personnel needed to complete a task.

In another example, a beginning teacher was in conflict with her department chairperson about classroom expectations. When confronted with the beginning teacher's concern, the principal offered to "pop in on your classroom more just to give you feedback" (T14). The new teacher expressed discomfort with the idea that the principal might "pop in" from time to time, and very quickly let the principal know that she would find a way to deal with the concern that did not involve the principal. Suggesting a less desirable alternative makes a negative situation seem more acceptable.

Strategy 3: Establishing Purpose (f=39)

The principal's primary interest is considered to be the most dominant issue, or purpose, in each school. In some of the schools in the present study the teachers and principals are in conflict over the purposes of schooling because the principal's values related to purpose are incongruent with the values of teachers. In other schools, the relationships between the principals and the teachers tend to be harmonious because of a feeling of solidarity related to purpose.

In each school, one of four issues is elevated to the status of "purpose" because of its importance in the principal's perspective. Issues that are considered to be purposes are public relations, order, instruction, and learning. Disagreement between principals and teachers over purposes often occurs because teachers are unable to understand how some issues, such as order or public relations, can be more important in their principal's opinion than instruction or learning.

Issue 1: Public Relations

The issue of appearances of both the school itself and of individual faculty members--both teachers and principals--is of concern in each school studied. All participants seem to equate public relations with maintaining a "professional image" both inside and outside the classroom, although there are differing opinions related to the importance and meaning of a "professional image." In some schools, the principals and teachers seem to share an understanding of appropriate public imaging; in other schools, the principals and teachers disagree about the meaning and importance of "good P.R."

Issue 2: Order

Although none of the principals described order as the purpose of their schools in their interviews, all six principals discussed the importance of maintaining order, or control, in the building. And even though no principal describes order as his/her primary interest, teachers in at least one school describe their principal as actually primarily occupied with attempts to maintain order. All participants agree, however, that order is an essential issue in their schools even if order is not the primary issue.

Issue 3: Instruction

Instruction, or the professional practices of teachers in the classroom, is of interest to all participants in the present study. All participants in the present study describe "instruction" as the primary issue, or purpose of schools. Both teachers and principals discuss the importance of establishing and maintaining an instructional focus in the high school. Every strategy and tactic described by the participants in the present study involves the central issue of instruction.

Issue 4: Learning

Learning, or the acquisition of knowledge and skills by students, is an issue with all participants in the study. Learning, like instruction, is a pervasive issue with all participants in the present study. The issue of learning is an underlying theme of every strategy and tactic described by the participants in the present study. Participants in the present study seem to assume that learning is an inevitable consequence of all the other activities going on in their buildings.

Establishing a purpose, or primary issue, enables principals to influence classroom activities. All six principals established similar issues, but differed in their emphasis on specific issues. One principal, probably because s/he has been in the school for a very short while, primarily monitors existing issues with the intent of being more directive after s/he weighs the situation. Other principals, either consciously or unconsciously, have decided which issues are most important. Although the list of important issues is very similar, principals differ in their emphases on specific issues. This emphasis on issues influences classroom activities. The identification of a purpose as well as

the choice of tactics varies with the situations and personalities involved.

Tactic 1: Choosing What to Notice (f=39)

In each high school studied, the issue to which the principal devotes the most attention becomes the primary, or most important, issue in the school. Even when teachers disagree with the principal's focus, the principal's primary interest becomes the most important issue with teachers both inside and outside of the classroom.

In the high schools studied, situational variables often determine which school-wide issue is of primary interest to the principal, and in fact, principals seem to be assigned to schools where the principal's primary interest is congruent with community or faculty expectations. The historical perspective of the community and the school staff influence the perspectives of the principals related to the most important issues in their schools.

Tactic 2: Choosing When to Notice (f=39)

Teachers interviewed think that the principals in the present study seem to always notice the issues that are their primary interest. Principals in HS1 and HS2 seem to always divert their attention from any other

concern when instructional concerns become apparent. P4 seems to always notice public relations concerns, and P6 seems to always notice order/control concerns. And P7 seems to be always fully occupied with student learning.

Tactic 8: Prioritizing the Issues (f=32)

In the schools studied, four issues--public relations, order, instruction, and learning--have become the purposes, or the apparent reasons for existence. All four of these issues are considered to be extremely important in all six schools, but each school has selected one primary issue as its purpose. By choosing a primary issue, principals provide a focus for the activities of teachers and students both inside and outside of the classroom. Other issues are still important, but teachers and students feel they know how to respond when issues conflict.

Tactic 9: Controlling the Agenda (f=31)

In each of the six high schools studied, the principal's ability to control the agenda of issues often determines the principal's ability to establish purpose. P1 used his/her first faculty meeting to establish control of issues at HS1--

> The first faculty meeting s/he ran was not one where we're going to try this....s/he knew what s/he was doing, s/he had answers for procedural questions that people had--s/he had clearly thought it through.

> S/he had made the decisions that needed to be made when we came in. S/he was organized and had it together and presented it, and I think people sort of sat back and went, "AH! At last! There's a package I can deal with." And it's more like being in school because s/he says, "You're gonna do it this way!"...It took a lot of the anxiety out and yet s/he turned around and with a very compassionate sign and said that if anybody had a child that it was their first day in kindergarten or first grade and they wanted to go with the child for that morning, they could get a half day sub--and nobody had ever even thought about getting off for that....[S/he] made us believe s/he knew the importance of our families and that it was no longer you're gonna do the job and forget your family---and that's important--you're a person, you're a parent, you're a husband, you're a teacher, and it's all got to come together and click. T11

The principal in that first faculty meeting set the tone. Teachers were convinced that their new principal was direct, firm, organized, "had it together," knew management techniques, and was in charge, but at the same time was compassionate and had respect for teachers' personal lives. The principal actually conducted that first faculty meeting using behaviors and techniques familiar to effective classroom teachers. The principal modeled appropriate teaching skills as s/he conducted the meeting. This faculty meeting not only helped to establish positive teacher perspectives but also served as a model for teachers in their own classrooms.

Strategy 4: Reducing Cognitive Dissonance (f=39)

Discomfort resulting from a knowledge of inconsistencies in the social setting is one of the "feelings" described by participants in the present study. Mental stress is caused by apparent distortions and discrepancies in how teachers interpret situations and how principals interpret the same situations. Notably, the principals in the present study often act as translators or interpreters who help determine meaning for other people. By reducing cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1919), principals are able to reduce distortions and discrepancies in the meanings that support the principals' interests. Principals in the present study are able to translate the meanings of classroom events in such a way that teachers interpret the events to have meanings consistent with the principals' perspectives. By translating events and thus reducing cognitive dissonance in the minds of teachers, principals are able to enhance the credibility teachers hold for them.

Tactic 1: Choosing What to Notice (f=39)

The principals in the present study often seem to notice discrepant events, or situations that seem inconsistent with the principals' perspectives of the

meaning of schooling. The principals seem to select classroom events to notice that conflict with their individual perspectives of the context of their schools. Often the things noticed bear important relationships with aspects of their own personalities and experiences.

As teachers in the present study become aware of classroom behaviors their principals choose to notice, the teachers sometimes experience cognitive dissonance as they try to make sense out of the principals' interests. The principals' interest in situations inevitably makes the situations important to teachers, but teachers sometimes question the appropriateness of the principals' interests. P1 notices the things that teachers think should be noticed when s/he tours and makes note of instructional events and when s/he places an emphasis on supporting instruction--

> S/he just seems to have a lot of truly love for education. I think that's the ultimate part of her/his personality that shows out. S/he thinks everything's important whether it's from ordering an overhead projector, to visiting a social studies class, to taking the seniors out to see a play if they're studying it--s/he thinks its all important and you never feel like whatever kind of concern you have is not important to him/her. Everything is a legitimate concern. T11

Teachers seem to understand the instructional focus more clearly than a focus on order or public relations.

Tactic 4: Assigning Meaning (f=30)

As teachers in the present study attempt to construct meaning for the contexts in which they work, principals often intercede by acting as translators of meaning. The construction of meaning by teachers is an attempt to reduce cognitive dissonance resulting from incongruities in situations.

By assigning meaning to events, principals in the present study affect the way teachers interpret classroom situations. Principals transfer their perspectives to teachers by acting as translators and thus affecting teachers' understandings and feelings related to situations. For example, P2 describes his/her school in such a way that teachers feel good about the accomplishments of their students. Teachers in HS2 believe that their school has changed from unacceptable to acceptable because of recent formal recognitions of student academic success.

Tactic 5: Minimizing Ambiguity (f=31)

The schools in the present study differ in the amount of ambiguity that surrounds all issues as well as which specific classroom issues are the least or most ambiguous. The ambiguity associated with incidents causes teachers in the present study to feel discomfort

due to the cognitive dissonance associated with the confusion.

The translation process requires that principals effectively communicate to teachers in such a way that ambiguity surrounding the meaning of issues is minimized. One of the first year teachers in the present study described himself/herself as feeling perplexed by the burden of choices with which s/he was faced as s/he attempted to work with his/her students.

> [My principal is a] very quiet and solitary [person], however at the same time s/he can be a lion from inside if it's needed....[S/he] handles, either in the classroom or out in the Commons area, a trouble maker or a child who just refuses to learn...in a very, very low toned voice, and s/he talks with them, and s/he reasons with them....s/he more or less taught me how to relax--how to have a more, I think, calm atmosphere in class and let things not bother me so much and be so personal....deal with the student privately--always privately and one on one--outside of class....I use him/her as an example....[S/he] will walk up and down the hall while I'm teaching, and I can tell that when the students see him/her walk outside, they will calm down.....In a peaceful, quiet manner, s/he can bring about armistice between two major rivals....in a solitary and very tranquil voice, s/he just says how it goes....the calmness will help them resolve the situation....I don't know if s/he really realizes how much that has been helpful to me, but it truly has been. T71

The principal's interpretation of ambiguous situations made the situations understandable to the new teacher.

Tactic 8: Prioritizing the Issues (f=32)

Teachers in the present study experience high levels of cognitive dissonance when teachers' classroom expectations seem to come into conflict with the principals' classroom expectations. Teachers describe themselves as being primarily interested in instruction and express serious concerns when principals appear to place other interests such as order or public relations above instruction. Teachers who express positive opinions of their principals' priorities usually think that their beliefs about instruction are congruent with their principals' beliefs about instruction.

All participants in the present study speak in terms of a "moral perspective" when they describe their own priorities for education. And most participants equate this "moral perspective" with placing the best interests of children above all other concerns. But disagreement exists about just what is in the best interests of children. All participants in the present study verbally equate an emphasis on instruction with the best interest of children, but detailed analysis of the descriptions of principal behaviors shows that other issues--public relations, order, or learning--may actually be foremost in the principals' influence strategies and tactics.

Regardless of which issue is dominant in the principals' attempts to influence teachers, however, all participants describe their own personal "moral perspective" as being focused on the best interests of children. Value incongruence, and thus cognitive dissonance, occurs when teachers and principals disagree about just what is in the best interest of children.

Tactic 9: Controlling the Agenda (f=31)

The teachers in HS7 describe their principal as in control of learning concerns but, at the same time determined to use collaboration as a means for establishing an agenda to guide his/her school--

> ...even though we don't always agree on the final decision, I always am sure that I had a chance to say what I thought....s/he always comes across as you all know more about it than I do....what s/he's really good at is getting out of us what we know and putting it together, and doing that decision making kind of thing by making use of the expertise of the people s/he hired to work with....s/he doesn't seem to have a need to control all the power. S/he seems to be comfortable...giving that power to somebody else--giving power to other people. T74

Control issues cause teachers in some of the other schools in the present study to experience cognitive dissonance when the principal seems to exercise unnecessary controls or to place control concerns above the issues that the teachers think should take priority. These teachers are generally compliant, but often express

concern with their principals' perspectives of the meaning of schooling.

Summary and Discussion

Principals who participated in the present study describe influence, or the ability to affect the choices made by teachers, as the primary function of their role during interactions with the faculty. In response to the questions, "How do you actually feel about influencing teachers?" and "What are your feelings toward that part of your job responsibility?", a principal in the present study responded, "It's the most important thing I do. I mean if they're not satisfied, if they're not motivated, if they're not empowered, they're not going to be effective with students in the classroom" (P6). Principal data are consistent with the statement made by Blau (1964) that "Power is the resource that makes it possible to direct and coordinate the activities of" [people] (p. 199).

The present study examines the conflict of interests in competitive interactions between principals and teachers as well as the factors contributing to solidarity of purpose between principals and teachers in more cooperative interactions. The context of these interactions is further complicated by the interests of

other groups such as students, parents, system level administrators, the board of education, businesses, and other political groups. Although these other interest groups are not the focus of the present study, their influence on the principals and the teachers in each school greatly affects the nature of the interactions between principals and teachers.

The principals in the six high schools studied rely heavily on subtleness as they attempt to control the formation of issues from concerns of the community, parents, students, teachers, and, of course, themselves. The principals in these schools realize that they are working in a political arena in which persuasion, tact, and compromise are effective.

McNeil (1986, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c) reported a study which examined the nature of the conflict between the purposes of instruction and order in the public high school. In her study, McNeil found that administrators and teachers tended to separate their work into domains with administrators focused on control and teachers focused on instruction. Teachers tended to talk about academic interests and thought that transmitting course content to students was the purpose of schooling. This lack of consensus between teachers and administrators

resulted in strong tension and lack of trust between the two. The teachers in the McNeil study thought that attempts to control students were excessive and often lacked consistency. McNeil concluded that teachers actually often had to teach in conflict with administrative policies.

Other studies describe the tension between teachers and administrators when teachers believe that administrators do not share their instructional focus. Blust and Willower (1979) studied teacher behavior relative to administrative expectations and found that student control measures complied with administrative expectations when teachers were visible to administrators. However, teacher behavior behind the closed door of the classroom was based more on the teacher's own beliefs about appropriate student behavior.

The nature of the interactions between teachers and principals in the present study greatly affects the interpretations of specific situations by all participants. Both the teachers and principals are actively involved in attempts to interpret, to make sense out of, and to construct meaning from their interactions with each other.

According to Blumer (1969), by interpreting specific situations, people develop perspectives that enable them to make sense out of the organizational context. These perspectives involve more than just knowing organizational norms and rules--these perspectives enable people to understand each other in the context of the situation under scrutiny. This understanding is more complex than a simple description of the behavior. Perspectives also include an affective component that gives the situation its contextual meaning. In the present study, this affective component was primarily normative in nature as participants generally described not only events, but also what the events meant or should have meant. The "moral" tone of the perspectives of the participants interviewed was conveyed by their frequent evaluations of the behaviors of themselves and others and by their frequent use of such words as "should" and "ought."

Participants in the present study have different interpretations of the importance of a moral perspective in schools. The teachers and most of the principals interviewed believe that a moral perspective is an essential part of success in working in schools, but they sometimes question the meanings that the principals and

other teachers attach to the word "moral." The teachers and principals interviewed in the present study describe the conflict resulting from differing interpretations of the meaning and importance of this moral perspective.

Principals in the present study, however, risk their credibility with their teachers when they hold perspectives that teachers interpret as incongruent with their own. When teachers believe that their principals do not ascribe to their moral perspective, conflict, both latent and overt, results. Conflict results when principals are apparently interested in issues that teachers do not consider to be particularly important, when principals choose to use strategies and tactics that seemed to contradict with the moral purpose of schooling, when principals select a purpose other than learning or instruction, when principals seem to have disregard for the "feelings" of others, or when principals appear to be ineffective. In the present study, these conflicts often damage the principals' credibility with teachers.

The effectiveness with which the principals in the present study are able to reduce cognitive dissonance related to issues determines the degree of credibility teachers have for their principals. The principals who are able to minimize the discrepancies and distortions in

their teachers' perceptions by choosing what to notice, by assigning meaning, by minimizing ambiguity, by prioritizing issues, and by controlling the agenda are believed by their teachers. Teachers in the present study believe principals who are able to effectively direct the development of teacher perspectives that are highly congruent with their own. The principals' credibility rests on the value congruence between the perspectives of teachers and principals.

References

Ball, S. (1987). The micro-politics of the school: Towards a theory of school organization. New York: Methuen.

Becker, H., Geer, B., Hughes, E., & Strauss, A. (1961). Boys in white: Student culture in medical school. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Blase, J. (1987a). Dimensions of effective school leadership: The teacher's perspective. American Educational Research Journal, 24(4), 589-610.

Blase, J. (1987b). Dimensions of ineffective school leadership: The teachers' perspective. The Journal of Educational Administration, 25(2), 193-213.

Blase, J. (1987c). Political interactions among teachers: Sociocultural context in the schools. Urban Education, 22(3), 286-309.

Blase, J. (1988a). The everyday political perspectives of teachers: Vulnerability and conservatism. Qualitative Studies in Education, 1(2), 125-142.

Blase, J. (1988b). The politics of favoritism: A qualitative analysis of the teachers' perspective. Educational Administration Quarterly, 24(2), 152-177.

Blase, J. (1988). The teachers' political orientation vis-a'-vis the principal: The micropolitics of the school. Journal of Education Policy, 3, 113-126.

Blase, J. (1989). The micropolitics of the school: The everyday political orientation of teachers toward open principals. Educational Administration Quarterly, 25(4), 377-407.

Blase, J. (1990). Some negative effects of principals' control-oriented and protective political behavior. American Educational Research Journal, 27(4), 727-754.

Blase, J. (1991). The politics of life in schools: Power, conflict, and cooperation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Blase, J. (in press). The micropolitical orientation of teachers toward closed school principals. Education and Urban Society.

Blase, J., & Kirby, P. (1992). Bringing out the best in teachers: What effective principals do. Newbury Park, CA Sage.

Blau, P. (1964) Exchange and power in social life. New York: Wiley.

Blumer, H. (1969). Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Blust, R., & Willower, D. (1979). Organizational pressure ideology and teacher pupil control behavior. The Journal of Educational Administration, 17(1), 68-74.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1982). Qualitative research methods. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Bogdan, R. & Taylor, S. (1975). Introduction to qualitative research methods: A phenomenological approach to the social sciences. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Carkhuff, R. (1980). The art of helping IV. Amherst, MA: Human Resource Development.

Corbett, H., Firestone, W., & Rossman, G. (1987). Resistance to planned change and the sacred in school cultures. Educational Administrative Quarterly, 23 (4), 36-59.

Crowson, R. & Porter-Gehrie, C. (1980). The discretionary behavior of principals in large city schools. Educational Administration Quarterly, 16(1), 45-69.

Etzioni, A. (1961). A comparative analysis of complex organizations. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Festinger, L. (1919). A theory of cognitive dissonance. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Glaser, B. (1978). Theoretical sensitivity. Mill Valley, CA: The Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Chicago: Aldine.

High, R. & Achilles, C. (1986). An analysis of influence-gaining behaviors of principals in schools of varying levels of instructional effectiveness. Educational Administration Quarterly, 22(1), 111-119.

Johnston, G. & Veneble, B. (1986). A study of teacher loyalty to the principal: Rule administration and hierarchical influence of the principal. Educational Administration Quarterly, 22(4), 4-27.

McNeil, L. (1988a). Contradictions of control, part 1: Administrators and teachers. Phi Delta Kappan, 69(5), 333-339.

McNeil, L. (1988b). Contradictions of control, part 2: Teachers, students and curriculum. Phi Delta Kappan, 69(6), 432-438.

McNeil, L. (1988c). Contradictions of control, part 3: Contradictions of reform. Phi Delta Kappan, 69(7), 478-485.

McNeil, L. (1986). Contradictions of control: School structure and school knowledge. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ogawa, R. & Hart, A. (1985). The effect of principals on the instructional performance of the schools. The Journal of Educational Administration, 23(1), 59-71.

Table 1

Strategies and Tactics Related to Specific Issues

Tactic	Strategy 1 Creating Issues	Strategy 2 Diffusing Issues	Strategy 3 Establishing Purpose	Strategy 4 Reducing Cognitive Dissonance
1 Choosing What to Notice	+	+	+	+
2 Choosing When to Notice	+	+	+	-
3 Lets Them Come to Him/Her	+	+	-	-
4 Assigning Meaning	+	+	-	+
5 Minimizing Ambiguity	+	+	-	+
6 Creating Diversions	-	+	-	-
7 Offering Alternatives	-	+	-	-
8 Prioritizing the Issues	-	-	+	+
9 Controlling the Agenda	-	-	+	+

Note. + indicates that the tactic is a part of the corresponding strategy.

Table 2

Frequency with Which Principals Described Tactics

Tactic	High School 1	2	3	4	6	7	%
1 Choosing What to Notice	+	+	+	+	+	+	100
2 Choosing When to Notice	+	+	+	+	+	+	100
3 Lets Them Come to Him/Her	+	+	-	+	+	+	83
4 Assigning Meaning	+	+	+	+	+	+	100
5 Minimizing Ambiguity	+	+	+	+	+	+	100
6 Creating Diversions	-	+	+	+	+	+	83
7 Offering Alternatives	-	+	+	+	+	+	83
8 Prioritizing the Issues	+	+	-	+	+	+	83
9 Controlling the Agenda	+	+	-	+	+	+	83

Note. + = described - + not described

Table 3

Percentage of Teachers Describing Tactics

Tactics	High School 1	2	3	4	6	7	X
1 Choosing What to Notice	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2 Choosing When to Notice	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
3 Lets Them Come to Him/Her	100	57	25	100	100	100	80
4 Assigning Meaning	88	71	50	100	50	100	77
5 Minimizing Ambiguity	88	71	50	100	50	100	77
6 Creating Diversions	88	100	50	50	50	75	69
7 Offering Alternatives	50	100	50	50	17	100	65
8 Prioritizing the Issues	75	100	25	100	83	100	81
9 Controlling the Agenda	63	100	25	100	83	100	79